



September 5, 1957

INFORMATION CIRCULAR NO. 82PUBLIC RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 15, 1957CIVIL DEFENSE DIRECTORS' RESPONSIBILITIES IN NATURAL DISASTERS

1. Governor George M. Leader recently addressed official comment concerning natural disaster responsibilities to the Pennsylvania Association of County Commissioners. This comment, relayed to the Association at its Annual Convention in Pittsburgh on August 27, 1957, by Mr. Harold R. Clark, Director of Civil Defense for Venango County, Member of the Board of Commissioners of Venango County and Chairman of the Association's Committee on Civil Defense, was as follows:

"Under the provisions of Section 4 of the State Council of Civil Defense Act of 1951, P.L. 28, as amended, the State Council of Civil Defense is charged with responsibility, in the event of earthquake, flood, fire, explosion or other natural disaster, for appropriate action aimed at the protection of life and property. The law also authorizes the Council to accept and coordinate federal assistance extended in 'major disasters,' under the provisions of Public Law 875, approved September 30, 1950.

"In view of the provisions of law just cited, I rely upon the State Director of Civil Defense, acting under my immediate direction and control, to coordinate all Commonwealth emergency assistance required to meet the threat of natural disasters.

"Also under existing provisions of law, county and local civil defense organizations hold natural disaster responsibilities basically similar to those placed upon the State Council of Civil Defense. Furthermore, Section 7 of the State Council of Civil Defense Act of 1951, P.L. 28, as amended, specifically charges County and Local Civil Defense Directors with responsibility for the organization, administration and operation of county and local civil defense organizations, subject to the direction and control of the executive officer, or governing body, of their respective political subdivisions.

"In view of the facts last stated, it is both legal and proper for the administrative heads of county and local government units to rely on their respective Directors of Civil Defense to coordinate county and local emergency assistance required by natural disasters. If the latter follow established operational procedures previously prescribed by the State Council of Civil Defense, effective coordination of State, county and local emergency operations readily can be achieved.

"Past experience painfully has demonstrated the vital need for full and effective coordination of State, county and local disaster operations. Since our present State-wide organization for civil defense provides a legally established means to this end, I urge all county and local government

1918

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

TO: THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

FROM: THE CHIEF OF THE BUREAU OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: [Illegible]

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officials not only to extend full support to their respective civil defense organizations, but also to rely on them to coordinate emergency action required to minimize the effects of natural disasters."

2. In addressing the above comment to the association of County Commissioners, Governor Leader spoke both as Head of the Commonwealth Government and as a Member of the State Council of Civil Defense. His remarks naturally reflect established policy of the State Council.

3. Since its creation in 1951, the State Council of Civil Defense firmly has held to the belief that sound and effective civil defense organizations can be developed only by expansion of existing services and facilities, together with creation of certain new services specially designed to meet the unusual problems peculiar to enemy attack. For example, the Council's Special Circular No. 1, dated February 8, 1952, recommends that local fire and police departments augmented by trained auxiliaries, be held responsible for fire protection, firefighting and police problems, and that new services, such as those concerned with attack warning, emergency welfare and radiological defense, be created to cope with other major problems usually faced only in wartime.

4. Obviously, the basic responsibility of all County and Local Civil Defense Directors is to integrate the plans and coordinate the operations of all emergency units comprising the organizations which they legally head.

5. In view of the facts set forth immediately above, together with the re-emphasis currently being placed on governmental responsibilities in emergencies, Governor Leader's quoted comment is deemed especially timely.

Richard Gerstell

Richard Gerstell
Director of Civil Defense

